

**THE SEASON OF LENT, A.D. 2020
MIDWEEK WORSHIP**

**THE SMALL CATECHISM:
ESSENTIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**



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Service of Evening Prayer
Third Wednesday in Lent – March 18, 2020

Welcome and Announcements

Opening Verses



L Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,



C the light no darkness can o - ver - come.



L Stay with us, Lord, for it is eve - ning,



C and the day is almost o - ver.



L Let Your light scatter the dark - ness



C and il - lu - mine Your Church.

Hymn of Light



L Joy - ous light of glo - ry:



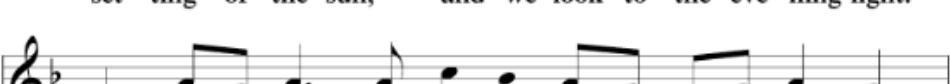
C of the im - mor - tal Fa - ther; heav - en - ly, ho - ly,



bless - ed Je - sus Christ. We have come to the



set - ting of the sun, and we look to the eve - ning light.



We sing to God, the Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it:

You are wor - thy of be - ing praised with pure voic - es for -
 ev - er. O Son of God, O Giv - er of life:
 the u - ni - verse pro - claims Your glo - ry.

Thanksgiving for Light

L Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of the u - ni - verse,
 who led Your people Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of
 fire by night. Enlighten our darkness by the light of Your Christ;
 may His Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;
 for You are mer - ci - ful, and You love Your whole cre - a - tion
 and we, Your creatures, glo - ri - fy You, Father, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it.
C A - men.

Psalm 141

C Let my prayer rise be - fore You as in - cense,

the lift - ing up of my hands as the eve-ning sac - ri - fice.

I O Lord, I call to You; come to me quick - ly; hear my voice

when I cry to You. C Let my prayer rise be - fore You as in-cense,

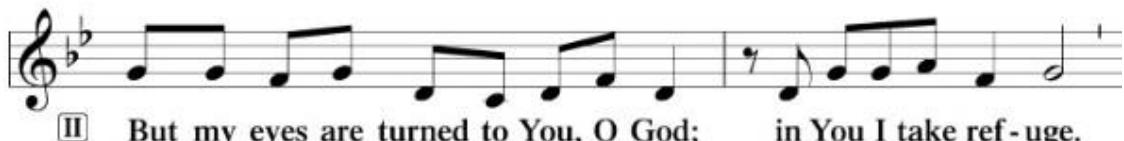
the lift-ing up of my hands as the eve-ning sac-ri - fice.

II Set a watch be-fore my mouth, O Lord, and guard the door of my lips.

I Let not my heart in - cline to an - y e - vil thing;



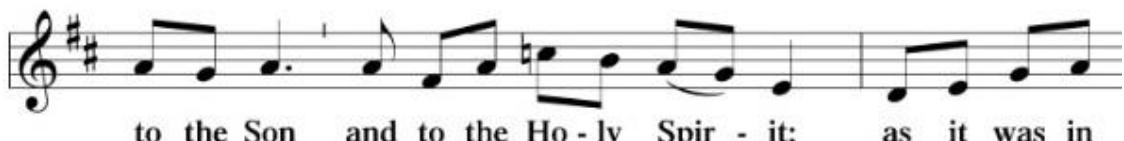
let me not be oc - cu - pied in wick-ed - ness with e - vil - do - ers.



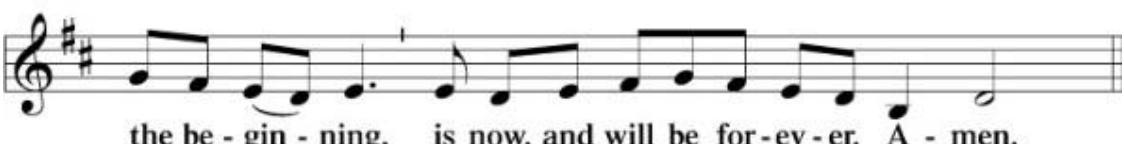
II But my eyes are turned to You, O God; in You I take ref - uge.



Strip me not of my life. C Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther and



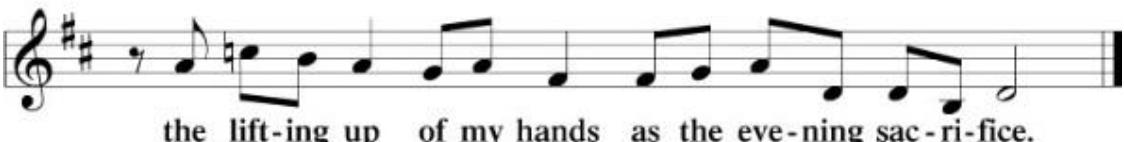
to the Son and to the Ho - ly Spir - it; as it was in



the be - gin - ning, is now, and will be for - ev - er. A - men.



Let my prayer rise be - fore You as in - cense,



the lift-ing up of my hands as the eve-night sac - ri - fice.

P Let us pray. Let the incense of our repentant prayer ascend before You, O Lord, and let Your loving-kindness descend on us that, with purified minds, we may sing Your praises with the Church on earth and the whole heavenly host and may glorify You forever.

C Amen.

First Reading Acts 2:38-39 (Pew Bible p.1158)

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

P: The Word of the Lord

C: **Thanks be to God.**

- P: What is Baptism?
- C: **Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word.**
- P: Which is that word of God?
- C: **Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)**
- P: What benefits does Baptism give?
- C: **It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words of promises of God declare.**
- P: Which are these words and promises of God?
- C: **Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)**
- P: How can water do such great things?
- C: **Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts in this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying." (Titus 3:5-8)**
- P: What does such baptizing with water indicate?
- C: **It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.**
- P: Where is this written?
- C: **St. Paul writes in Romans, chapter six: "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:4)**

Second Reading *Romans 6:1-11 (Pew Bible p. 1199)*

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

- P: The Word of the Lord
- C: **Thanks be to God.**

Office Hymn: LSB 590, Baptized Into Your Name Most Holy

1 Bap - tized in - to Your name most ho - ly, O Fa - ther, Son, and
2 My lov - ing Fa - ther, here You take me To be hence-forth Your
3 My faith - ful God, You fail me nev - er; Your prom - ise sure - ly
4 All that I am and love most dear-ly— Re - ceive it all, O

Ho - ly Ghost, I claim a place, though weak and low - ly,
child and heir. My faith - ful Sav - ior, here You make me
will en - dure. O cast me not a - way for - ev - er
Lord, from me. Let me con - fess my faith sin - cere - ly;

A - mong Your saints, Your cho - sen host. Bur - ied with Christ and
The fruit of all Your sor - rows share. O Ho - ly Spir - it,
If words and deeds be - come im - pure. Have mer - cy when I
Help me Your faith - ful child to be! Let noth - ing that I

dead to sin, Your Spir - it now shall live with - in.
com - fort me When threat'ning clouds a - round I see.
come de - filed; For - give, lift up, re - store Your child.
am or own Serve an - y will but Yours a - lone.

Text and tune: Public domain

Sermon

Water – there’s a pretty good chance we usually take it for granted. I assume that every time I turn on the tap, fresh clean water will come out. We drink it, as do our plants, our pets, and practically everything else on earth. We use it to wash our clothes and our dishes, to wash our hands and the rest of us. Without plenty of water, there’s a lot of things in our life that would be immeasurably harder or flat-out impossible.

Tonight, our midweek Lenten walk through Luther’s Small Catechism takes us to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Baptism gets its name for the ancient Greek work for washing, βαπτίζω. Baptism is washing, cleaning something with water. After dinner, you’d “baptize” your dirty dishes. In Holy Baptism, God uses water to wash dirty people – and He does a lot more than just cleaning off some dirt. As we read together from the Small Catechism just a moment ago, Holy Baptism “works the forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.” Baptism is about God giving gifts. If you’re looking to find a theme that runs through the Small Catechism, there it is!

Baptism delivers divine gifts. First and foremost, God works through the water and the Word to deliver faith, the gift by which you and I are able to receive all the rest of God’s gifts. And for those who receive faith by hearing the Good News of Jesus (Rom. 10:17), Baptism gives a strengthening of faith. It brings life to people who were born spiritually dead. Baptism is also a washing – a drowning, really – of the old self, the natural-born sinner who was an enemy of God. God cleanses us from the “dirt” of our sin, even the sinful nature we inherited from our first parents. Washed clean in the water of Baptism, God gives you forgiveness and freedom. God uses Baptism to rescue you from slavery to sin, from the rule of the devil. God returns you to the safety and security of soul that can only come from the restored relationship with Him that He gives.

The Triune God is on a mission to restore creation to Himself. Baptism connects you with God. It might not seem like much on the surface, ordinary water connected with God’s Word of promise. But that’s the thing about the sacraments – the holy things of God: God seizes the ordinary and uses it for the extraordinary. God

takes water and uses it to deliver His gifts, washing off even the deep-set stain of sin. With the water, God signs your adoption papers to make you His child. In Baptism, through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, you are given a new identity: you are God's child, forever.

How can water do such great things, Luther asks? Because it is not plain water doing these things; it is the command of Christ and the Word of God, connected to the water. The sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper which we'll get to in two weeks, are like physical forms of the Gospel. The Word of God and the command and invitation of Christ are connected to a specific physical thing – because as human beings, we're not just disembodied spirits floating around, but rather embodied creatures, body and soul together as God made us. He gives us His grace in body and soul together, in ways we can feel and touch and hang on to. We are embodied; to save us, God because embodied in Christ; now, He still gives us grace and blessings in a very embodied, physical way.

Christian life is baptized life. In our congregation, you'll most often see the rite of Holy Baptism as something that's given for young children, and then, only on occasion. You might not think about it very often. The rite of Confirmation, coming up later this spring for our two current students, is an affirmation of Baptism. But Baptism plays a key part of each day of the Christian's life, regardless of your age when you were baptized. And because it's God doing the important part and not us, Holy Baptism is a lasting, permanent gift; it's not something that you'd ever need to have repeated. Even if you stray from life with God and start doing what some call "backsliding," God's promise to you in Baptism is still in effect. He will still be working to call you back, to rescue you from sin and return you to the joy of His presence.

For those who are baptized, every day is a new beginning in God's grace, a new day in Baptism. Rise daily in your baptism, remembering and delighting that God has declared you to be His own, forgiven and set free. As the Catechism says it somewhat poetically, we daily drown the old Adam in us, the old sinful nature that continues to hang on throughout this life. God hasn't left you to work it all out on your own. Let the choices that you make be shaped by your identity as a baptized child of God, as every day we remember we are baptized, we rejoice in God's forgiveness and blessings, and we strive to put that old Adam aside and instead imitate the New Adam, Jesus.

Even though a specific rite of baptism doesn't really occur in the Old Testament, there's any number of Old Testament stories that have connections with Baptism. Paul says that baptism is the new circumcision, a rite that marked entrance into and identity as one of God's people. And the Old Testament priests were given a number of cleansing rituals to follow that bear similarities to baptism – we remember the New Testament also calls the entire body of Christian believers "a royal priesthood."

But it's in several stories and historical events we see baptism explained and foreshadowed. The first is the Flood and Noah's ark: the Christian Church has been pictured as an ark since the earliest days of the Church. As I've mentioned before in sermons, the area in a Medieval cathedral where the congregation goes is called the nave, which means ship. In the Flood, water destroyed the sinful, unbelieving people and cleansed the face of the earth from sin, while believing Noah and his family were carried safely through – just as in baptism, water washes away sin as we are brought safely through into a new life on the other side. This connection between the Flood and Baptism is explicitly made in 1 Peter chapter 3.

The next is the crossing of the Red Sea during the Exodus. The people of Israel were led through the water to safety on the other side, while Pharaoh's army that wanted to stop them or harm them was drowned in the middle – the powers of evil are drowned in the water, and the people of God are brought to safety on the other side of the water, just as Baptism drowns sin and the old Adam and brings us into spiritual safety as God's beloved child. Again, I'm not making this up: it's a connection Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 10.

Another happens at the end of those forty years of wilderness wandering, crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. In keeping with God's direction, priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stood in the

middle of the Jordan and the river stopped flowing while the whole people of Israel crossed over. And the book of Joshua tells us the purpose of this was not just for Israel's benefit, but also "so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever." Of course, the Jordan is where Jesus himself would later be baptized – the location reminds us of the Father's words there, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am very pleased." There at the Jordan, we and all people of the earth do see the power and mercy of God on display, and just as Joshua led the Israelites to their homeland, Jesus (the new Joshua!) leads us to our heavenly homeland, into God's kingdom through Baptism.

And so, as the Catechism reminded us, though baptism itself is a once-in-a-lifetime event, we should remember every day that we are baptized and what this means for us – God has saved us, God brings us into His family, God washes away our sins. And every day, most especially in this repentant season of Lent, we daily repent, rejoice in God's forgiveness, and get up again "to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

Canticle Magnificat of Mary

C My soul mag - ni - fies the Lord, and my spir - it re -
joic - es in God, my Sav - ior. My soul mag-ni-fies the
Lord, and my spir - it re - joic - es in God, my Sav - ior.

1 For _____ He has re - garded
2 For the Mighty One has done great things to me,
3 He has shown strength with His arm;
4 He has filled the hungry with good things,
5 Glo - ry be to the Father and to the Son

1 the lowliness of His hand - maiden.
2 and holy is His name;
3 He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
4 and the rich He has sent emp ty a - way.
5 and to the Ho - ly Spirit;

1 For be - hold, from this day
2 and His mercy is on those who fear Him
3 He has cast down the mighty from their thrones
4 He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy
5 as it was in the be - ginning,

1 all generations will call me blesse d.
2 from generation to gen - er - ation. *Refrain*
3 and has exalt ed the lowly.
4 as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for - ever.
5 is now, and will be forever. A - men. *Refrain*

Prayers of the Church – the Litany Prayer

The congregation's response begins just as the leader's petition ends, so that the word "Lord" is sung simultaneously by both leader and congregation.

L In peace let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For Matthew, our Synod president; Eric, our District president; all pastors in Christ; all servants of the Church; and for all people, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For Donald, our president; Tate, our governor; for all public servants, for the government and those who protect us, that they may be upheld and strengthened in every good deed, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For those who work to bring peace, justice, health, and protection in this and every place, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For those who bring offerings, those who do good works in this congregation, those who toil, those who sing, and all the people here present who await from the Lord great and abundant mercy, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and need, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

L For the faithful who have gone before us and are with Christ, let us give thanks to the Lord:

Lent: C Thanks be to God.

L



L Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord.

Silence for individual prayer may follow.



L Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ, our Lord:

C To You, O Lord.

Evening Prayer from the Small Catechism

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

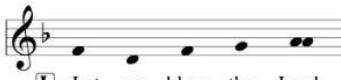
Lord's Prayer

L Taught by our Lord and trusting His promises, we pray:

C Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed by Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction



L Let us bless the Lord.



C Thanks be to God.



P The almighty and merciful Lord,
the Father, the † Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and pre - serve you.



C A - men.

Closing Hymn: LSB 597, Water, Blood, and Spirit Crying



1 Wa - ter, blood, and Spir - it cry - ing, By their wit - ness
2 In a wa - t'ry grave are bur - ied All our sins that
3 Dark the way, yet Christ pre - cedes us, Past the scowl of
4 Though a - round us death is seeth - ing, God, His two - edged
5 Spir - it, wa - ter, blood en - treat - ing, Work-ing faith and



tes - ti - fy - ing To the One whose death - de - fy - ing
Je - sus car - ried; Christ, the Ark of Life, has fer - ried
death He leads us; Spreads a ta - ble where He feeds us
sword un - sheath - ing, By His Spir - it life is breath-ing
its com - plet - ing In the One whose death - de -feat - ing



Life has come, with life for all.
Us a - cross death's rag - ing flood.
With His bod - y and His blood.
Through the liv - ing, ac - tive Word.
Life has come, with life for all.

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About this year's Lenten series:

Often congregations and pastors choose to use a themed series for the midweek services during Advent and Lent, and this year we are taking the opportunity to review the Small Catechism together as a congregation. The Small Catechism has historically formed the foundation of Christian education in the Lutheran tradition, going back to its original purpose when written and published by Martin Luther in 1529.

He had recently undertaken a series of visits to rural parishes where he was appalled by the lack of Biblical and Christian knowledge among both priests and parishioners alike; his Catechism was meant to help fill that void. A “catechism” is simply a manual for “catechesis,” a Greek word meaning “instruction.” During the Early Church, back as far as the 3rd or 4th Century AD, those who wished to join and be baptized were catechized first, culminating in the season of Lent as a time of intensive preparation and instruction.

This is linked with Christ’s command in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 and that inherent connection between baptism and instruction. At the end of this catechetical period, they would be baptized during the Easter Vigil service on Saturday before joining the rest of the congregation Sunday morning for the great Easter festival as fully recognized members of the Church. Therefore it is especially appropriate that we should review these “ABCs of Christian faith” during our own Lenten season.

Far from being something for Confirmation students to learn, and from which we then graduate to higher Bible studies, learning and understanding the Catechism is a life-long project. Luther himself said, “I am a doctor and preacher, as learned and experienced as all those who [believe they know better]. Yet I act as a child who is being taught the catechism. Every morning and whenever I have time I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Psalms, and such. I must still read them and study them daily. Yet I cannot master the catechism as I wish, but I must remain a child and pupil of the catechism, and am glad to remain so.”